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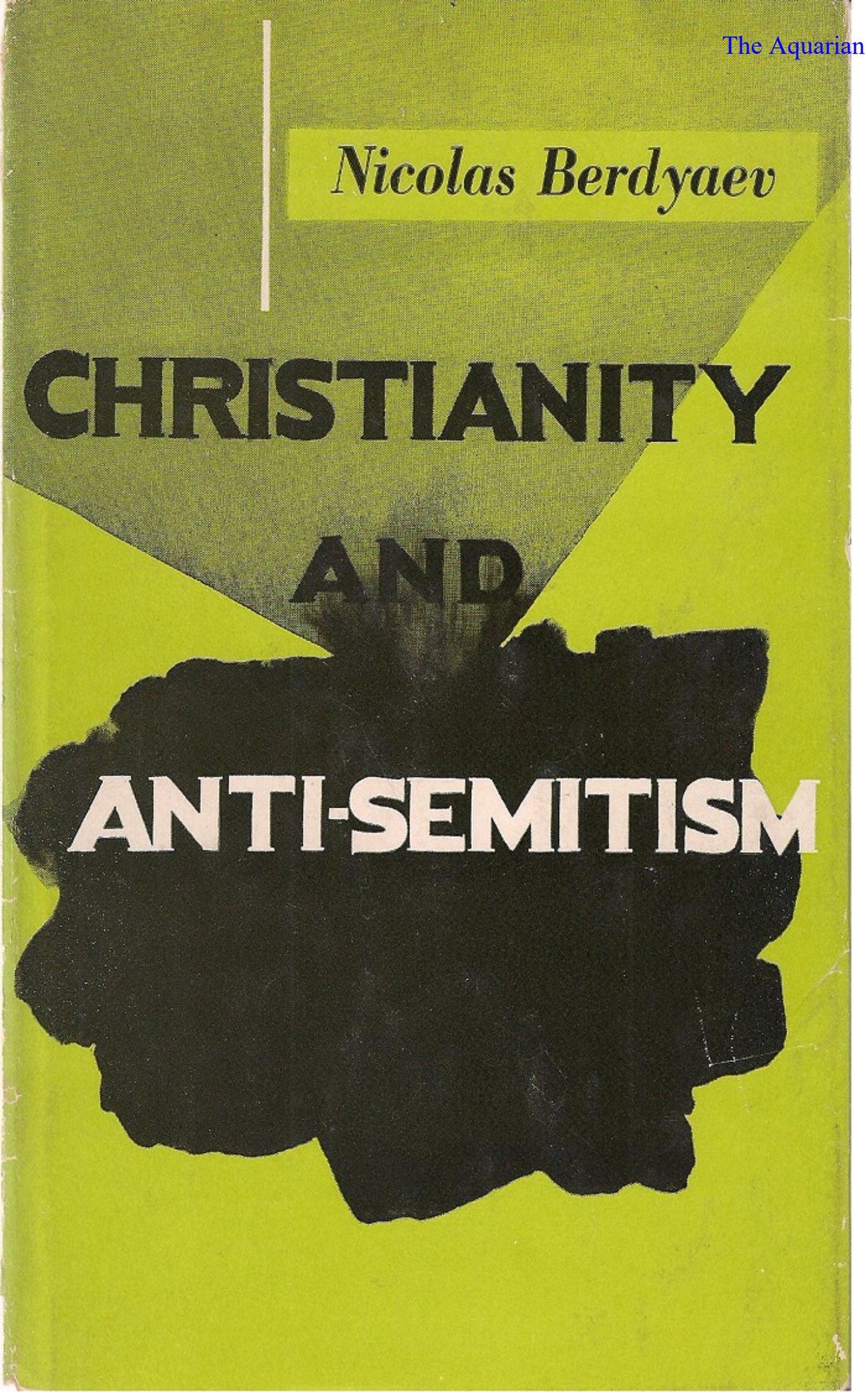

CHRISTIANITY AND ANTI-SEMITISM

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with a commentary and notes
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THAT fervent Catholic, Léon Bloy,[1] wrote in one of his works: 'Suppose that there were people round you continually speaking of your father and mother with the utmost contempt, who had nothing to offer them but insults and offensive sarcasms, how would you feel? Well, this is just what happens to our Lord Jesus Christ. We forget, or rather we do not wish to know, that our God made man is a Jew, nature's most perfect Jew, the lion of Judah, that his mother is a Jewess, the flower of the Jewish race; that the Apostles were Jews, as well as all the Prophets; and finally that our whole sacred Liturgy is drawn from Jewish books. In consequence, how may one express the enormity of the outrage and blasphemy of vilifying the Jewish race?'

These words are addressed to Christians, who ought to understand them. In truth, the superficiality of Christians who believe they can possibly be anti-semites is prodigious! As a matter of fact, Christianity, in its human origins, is a religion of messianic

and prophetic type, the spirit of which, as utterly foreign to Greco-Roman spiritual culture as to Hindu culture, was introduced into world religious thought by the Jewish people. The 'Aryan' spirit is neither messianic nor prophetic; to await the coming of the Messiah—the irruption into history of forces beyond history—is foreign to it. Moreover, the fact that German anti-semitism has evolved into anti-Christianity must be considered a highly significant symptom. A wave of anti-semitism has broken upon the world, casting away the humanitarian theories of the nineteenth century and daily threatening to submerge new lands. In Germany, in Poland, in Rumania, in Hungary this movement is triumphant, and it is taking shape even in France, the country most fully saturated with liberal ideas, where it had suffered a defeat after the Dreyfus affair. The first alarming signs of the disease can be detected in the publication of Céline's book,[2] a veritable call to a pogrom; and they are also betrayed by the fact that a growing number of Frenchmen reproach Léon Blum with his origins, even though he is one of the most honest, idealistic and cultured of political figures in the country. Anti-semitism is coming to the surface of political life with glaring obviousness, and the press gives us a daily account of this process.

The Jewish question, however, is not simply one of politics, economics, law or culture. It is incomparably more profound than that, a religious ques-

tion with a bearing upon the fate of mankind. It is the axis about which religious history turns. How mystifying is the historic destiny of the Jews! The very preservation of this people is rationally inconceivable and inexplicable. From the point of view of ordinary historical estimates it should have vanished long ago. No other people in the world would have survived the fate which has befallen it. By a strange paradox, the Jewish people, an historic people *par excellence* who introduced the very concept of the historic into human thought, have seen history treat them mercilessly, for their annals present an almost uninterrupted series of persecutions and denials of the most elementary human rights. Yet, after centuries of tribulation which have strained its powers to the full, this people has preserved its unique form, known to all and often cursed. No other nation would have resisted a dispersion lasting so long without in the end dissolving and disappearing. But, according to God's impenetrable ways, this people must apparently be preserved until the end of time. As for trying to explain its historic destiny from the materialist standpoint, this is to court certain defeat. Here we touch upon one of the mysteries of history.

The Jewish problem may be viewed from many sides, but it assumes a particular importance, as a problem essentially bound up with Christianity. In the past anti-semitism was fomented and propagated above all by Christians, for whom, precisely, it

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should have been least conceivable. Did not the Middle Ages witness the persecution and annihilation of the Jews by the feudal knights who thus avoided having to pay their debts! There can be no doubt that Christians bear a heavy burden of sin in regard to the people of Israel, and it is upon Christians that the duty of protecting them now rests. We know that this is already the case in Germany. It is not without value to recall, in this matter, the fact that Wladimir Solovyev[3] believed the defence of the Jews to be one of the important missions of his life. For us Christians the Jewish problem does not consist in knowing whether the Jews are good or bad, but whether we are good or bad. For it is more important that I should consider this question with reference to myself rather than to my neighbour, since I am always inclined to accuse him. It must be sadly confessed that the Christians have not risen to the height of the revelation they have received, and have in general been considerably inferior to the Jews.

The Christians and their Churches have a great many things to repent. We have just spoken of the Jewish problem, but we could also mention the social problem, that of war, that of their perpetual compliance with the most hideous régimes, and so forth. The question of inherent Jewish imperfections is of no importance in principle at this point. It is futile to deny them, for they are many. There is in particular a Jewish self-importance which is irritating, but it can be psychologically accounted for: this people, always oppressed by others, has sought compensation in the idea of its Election and its high mission. In the same way, the German people, oppressed during the years after the war, found reparation in the idea that it formed a superior race with a vocation to dominate the world. Likewise the proletariat, the most oppressed class in capitalist society, finds a remedy for the effects of this humiliation in the conviction of its own messianic mission, namely to emancipate humanity. Every individual, every class or people, defends itself as best it can against the inferiority complex.

The Jewish people is a strange people reconciling the most diametrically opposite qualities. Within it the best traits blend with the lowest, the thirst for social justice with the tendency towards gain and capitalist accumulation. The Russian people, because of its polarized nature and its messianic consciousness, shows certain similarities to the Jewish. Anti-semites freely invoke the fact that the Bible bears witness to the cruel spirit of the Hebrews. But what people could flatter itself upon exemption from cruelty? Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians —did they display greater forbearance? Did not the Greeks, to whom we owe the greatest culture in the world, show certain imperfections? In truth, every people must be judged by its greatest heights, not by its lowest depths. The German people must be judged by its great philosophers, its mystics, its mu-

sicians, its poets, not by its Prussian Junkers and its shopkeepers. In the same way, the Jewish people, which has a religious vocation, must be judged by its prophets and its apostles, and not by its money-lenders. Everyone is free to have his national sympathies and antipathies. Some people harbour an acute dislike for the Poles or the Rumanians. It is scarcely possible to remedy this state of affairs, for love cannot be ordered and it is difficult to overcome an unconsidered antipathy. At any rate hatred for a whole people is a sin in the same category as murder, and he who harbours it in his heart must bear the responsibility.

The question we are dealing with here is still more complex in its reference to the Jews, for they cannot be classed as a national entity. They lack many accepted attributes of a nation, and on the other hand they possess traits which cannot be classified as national. Israel is a people with an exceptional religious destiny, and it is this which determines the tragic element in its historic destiny. How could it have been otherwise? God's chosen people, who at one and the same time gave us the Messiah and rejected him, could not have an historic destiny like that of other peoples. Their descendants are forever strengthened and united by the exclusive possession of their religious destiny. Christians are bound to acknowledge the Election of the Jewish people, for their religious doctrine demands it, but they do so

most often against their will and try as much as possible to forget it.

We are living in an age of ferocious nationalism, of the worship of brute strength, of a veritable return to paganism. By a strange turn of events, we are witnessing a process diametrically opposed to the christianizing and humanizing of human societies. Nationalism should be condemned by the Christian Church as a heresy, and the Catholic Church is not far from pronouncing this verdict. But nationalism is not the only force which should be held responsible for implanting anti-semitism. To find the roots of it one must dig more deeply. There undeniably exists a mystical fear of the Jews. True, it is experienced by creatures of a fairly low cultural level who can be easily infected by myths and legends of the most debased variety, but it plays havoc none-the-less for that.

II

How paradoxical the Jewish destiny is! In fact we see them passionately seeking an earthly kingdom, without, however, possessing their own State, a privilege enjoyed by the most insignificant of peoples; they are fired with the messianic idea of their Election to which are related, however, contempt and persecution at the hands of other people; they reject the Cross as a temptation, while their whole history presents nothing but a perpetual crucifixion. Perhaps the saddest thing to admit is that those who

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rejected the Cross have to carry it, while those who welcomed it are so often engaged in crucifying others.

Anti-semitism takes many forms which can evidently exist together and support each other. I shall not pause over the anti-semitic feelings of the average man, displayed in sarcasm, comical imitations and a contempt for the Jews whom he refuses to treat as his equals; although these do not play a minor part, they are in principle irrelevant, since they are generally unconnected with any ideology. It is in racial anti-semitism, the variety which is anyhow most widespread, that a real ideology appears. Germany is its classical cradle, and we find that even her most outstanding and famous men such as Luther, Fichte or Wagner felt hostile to Israel. This ideology holds that the Jews are an inferior race despised by the rest of humanity to whom they are themselves hostile. But, on the other hand, it considers this inferior race to be the strongest, eternally triumphant over all the others wherever free competition exists. Is there not a certain contradiction here?

Racial anti-semitism is plainly ruled out for the Christian, since it is inevitably barred by the universalism of his faith. This universalism, precisely, is the cause of the persecution of Christians in Germany, Christianity proclaimed that there was no longer Greek nor Jew. It speaks to the whole of humanity and to every individual irrespective of his race, his nationality, his class and his social position.

Not only racial anti-semitism, but racialism pure and simple does not bear criticism from three points of view: religious, moral and scientific. The Christian cannot accept it, for it is inhuman, it rejects the dignity and the value of man in admitting that he can be treated as an enemy who may be destroyed. Racialism presents the crudest form of materialism, singularly cruder than that of economic materialism. It corresponds to an extreme determinism and a final negation of spiritual freedom. Members of the outcast races suffer the fatal consequences of their blood and cannot hope for salvation. Economics depends upon ideas, not upon physiology and anatomy, and its determining factors are after all not conditioned by the shape of the skull and the colour of the hair. Thus, racial ideology is dehumanized in a greater degree than proletarian ideology. From the standpoint of social class, in fact, a man may gain salvation by proceeding to transform his conscience, for example by adopting the Marxist conception of the world. Even if he is by birth a bourgeois or an aristocrat he can hope to become a people's commissar. Neither Marx nor Lenin was a proletarian. From the racial point of view, however, the Jew can have no salvation; neither conversion to Christianity, nor even adherence to national socialist doctrine can help him in the least. Blood overrules any development of conscience.

From the purely scientific point of view racialism is yet again inconsistent. As a matter of fact, con-

temporary anthropology considers the very concept of race to be extremely dubious. Racialism is really founded upon mythology rather than upon science. The category of race depends not at all upon anthropology and history, but upon zoology and prehistory. History is only conscious of nationalities, the result of a complex inter-mixture of blood. The notion of the chosen Aryan race is a myth developed by Gobineau,[4] a remarkable artist and highly sensitive thinker who intended to justify not anti-semitism but aristocratism; at any rate, his value as an anthropologist is more than debatable. The notion of the chosen race is a myth of the same order as that of the chosen class. But a myth can be very effective in practice; it can carry an explosive dynamic energy and move the masses to action, for they are not much concerned with scientific truth, nor with the plain truth either. We live in an era especially fertile in myths, but their quality, alas, is of a low order. The only serious racial philosophy to have existed in history is that of the Jews. The synthesis in which blood, religion and nationality were fused, the faith in a people's Election, the concern for racial purity, are so many ideas of Jewish origin. I sometimes wonder whether the German racialists are aware of the influence they submit to. Racialism contains precisely no Aryan element. The Hindu and Greek Aryans were far more in favour of individualism. At the same time there is a profound difference between Jewish and German racial philosophies. The former

is universal and messianic, while the latter is an aggressive particularism aiming to conquer the world. This racialism undeniably marks a lamentable relapse into barbarism and paganism.

There is also a form of anti-semitism which may be called political and economic, for here politics serves as the tool of economics. It is a particularly vile variety, since it springs from the idea of competition and the struggle for superiority. The Jews are accused of speculation and of self-enrichment at the expense of other peoples. Most often, however, it appears that those who accuse them reveal not so much a contempt for this kind of risky enterprise, as a desire to go in for it themselves and finally to triumph over the Jews. In these circumstances, it will be agreed that the argument loses something of its value.

Still more often hatred of the Jews corresponds to the need of having a scapegoat. When men feel unhappy and connect their personal misfortunes with historic ones, they try to make someone responsible for it. This state of mind does not of course do honour to human nature, but man is so constituted that he feels relief and satisfaction when he has found a culprit whom he can hate and on whom he can take reprisals. Now nothing is easier to exploit, in men whose thought is crude and credulous, than the culpability of the Jews. The emotional soil is always ready to receive the myth of the Jewish world conspiracy, of the secret forces of Jewish freemasonry,

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etcetera. I think it beneath my dignity to refute at this point the authenticity of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion',[5] for any man who has preserved a rudimentary psychological sense realizes, in reading this counterfeit document, that it is nothing but a shameful falsification by the detractors of Israel. Moreover, it can now be considered as proved by the police that this document is a fabrication from beginning to end. I sometimes happen to meet men who try to blame someone for every iniquity and are ready to attack the Jews, the Freemasons, etcetera. When they ask: 'Well, then, whose fault is it?' 'What!' I reply: 'Whose fault? You and I are mostly to blame.' This accusation is the only one which seems to me worthy of Christians.

Besides I find something humiliating in this fear and hatred of the Jews; the result is that people regard them as very powerful, and think themselves unable to stand up to competition with them. The Russians were inclined to believe that they were weak and powerless when they possessed an immense State with an army, a Secret Service and a police force, and they used to regard the Jews, who were deprived of elementary human rights and persecuted, as invincible in the struggle. There is something childish in this. The pogrom is not only a shameful and inhuman thing: to me it is a sign of terrifying weakness and incompetence. In fact, if we return to the source of anti-semitism, we will find a confession of lack of ability, for how are we to interpret the

regrets we hear expressed that Einstein who discovered the law of relativity, Freud[6] and Bergson are of Jewish origin, if not as the resentment of men themselves devoid of talent? These reactions contain an element which is pitiable. As I see it, there is only one way to fight against the alleged Jewish domination in science and philosophy, and that is to get on with research ourselves, to make great discoveries ourselves. Here we can only fight by producing our own creations, for the realm of culture is that of liberty. Now liberty is a test of powers. And it would be humiliating to think that this liberty could always be in favour of the Jews, to the detriment of the others.

Another grievance against the Jews must be faced. They are accused of having laid the foundations of capitalism and socialism. But it would seem desirable as much for supporters of capitalism as for those of socialism to give some credit to the 'Aryans'. After all, one can't surrender everything to the Jews! Yet, indeed, it is they who have made all the scientific discoveries, distinguished themselves as eminent philosophers, founded capitalist industry, recruited the world socialist movement, concentrated into their hands public opinion, the press, etcetera. I avow that as an 'Aryan' my self-respect is wounded, and I refuse to accept this point of view. I will pause to consider the creation by the Jews of capitalism and socialism.

To begin with, if a reproof has to be formulated

on both counts, no single person can utter it. Indeed, if the fact that the Jews founded capitalism is regarded as a virtue by supporters of that régime, their contribution to socialism is praiseworthy from the point of view of socialists. A choice must therefore be made between these two accusations. A well-known work by Sombart[7] argues that the Jews played a predominant part in the birth of capitalism. Actually European capitalism saw the light of day among Florentine merchants.[8] None-the-less, that the Jews took an active part in its development is beyond question, likewise the fact that they amassed great sums of capital in their hands. Their particular qualities, developed in the course of history, counted for much in this process. If the Jews practised usury in the Middle Ages, it must not be forgotten that this was the sole profession permitted to them at the time. I think it an injustice to stigmatise the Jewish race with having created the figure of the usurer and the banker, while pretending not to know that it has created equally the model of the idealist, completely devoted to an idea, of the unworldly living entirely for higher purposes. Further, if we admit that the Jews were active in founding capitalism, we can hardly deny that the 'Aryans' laboured eagerly in the same cause. Those who reproach the Jews with having begotten capitalism are not generally opponents of this régime, and their invective springs mainly from a feeling of spite or envy, a desire to predominate in competition. It is curious to observe

that Karl Marx, a Jew and a socialist, was in certain respects anti-semitic. In his article on the Jewish question, which worries a great many Marxists, he accuses the Jews of introducing capitalist exploitation. Thus Marx's revolutionary anti-semitism refutes the legend of the Jewish world conspiracy. Marx and Rothschild, though both Jews, are implacable enemies and could not co-operate in one and the same conspiracy. Marx fought against the power of capital, Jewish capital included.

The second allegation, to the effect that the Jews instigated socialism and have been the chief agitators of revolutionary movements, can apparently come only from those who feel no disdain for capitalism and would like to protect the régime. To this we shall reply that in all revolutions those elements which are wronged and oppressed, whether they be nationalities or classes, will always play the biggest part. That is why the proletariat has always raised the standard of revolt. For my part, I hold that their championing of a more equitable social order is to the honour of the Jews.

To tell the truth, all the attacks can be finally reduced to a single complaint: the Jews aspire to power and world domination. This reproach would have a moral meaning on the lips of those who abjured power and dominion. Alas! the 'Aryans' and the 'Christian-Aryans' whose faith exhorts them to seek the kingdom which is not of this world have always been infatuated with worldly supremacy. Not

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only have the Jews never had world sovereignty, but they have never had even a particle of sovereignty, while Christians have been in possession of mighty states and have pursued a policy of expansion and empire.

Let us now turn to the type of anti-semitism with a religious basis, the most serious type and the only one worthy of study. It is chiefly this variety that Christians once professed. It holds the Jews to be a race reproved and accursed, not by reason of the blood in their veins, but because they rejected Christ. Religious anti-semitism is, in fact, confused with anti-Judaism and anti-Talmudism. The Christian religion actually is opposed to the Jewish religion in the form it took after the refusal to see the awaited Messiah in Christ. The Judaism which preceded Christ's coming, and that which succeeded it, are two distinct spiritual manifestations. A profound paradox must be observed in the fact that the divine incarnation, the assumption by God of human form, arose in the heart of the Hebrew people, to whom this mystery was even less acceptable than it was to the pagans. Indeed, the idea that God could become man seemed a sacrilege to the Jews, an assault upon divine power and transcendence. For them God is continually active in our human life, even in its slightest details, but he does not become unified with man, never fuses with him and could not borrow his likeness. There lies the gulf separating the Christian conscience from the Jewish. Christianity is the re-

ligion of God-humanity, and trinitarian, while Judaism is a pure monotheism. Indeed the chief reproach uttered by the Jews against Christianity is that it constitutes a betrayal of the One God in whose place it puts the Trinity. Christians base their religion upon the fact that there appeared in history a man who called himself God, the Son of God. Now, to the rigid Jewish conscience, man can only be prophet or Messiah, but never God. The man who could take this title as his own is not the true Messiah. Here is the crux of the universal religious tragedy. The pagans had many god-men and men-gods; according to them the gods were always immanent in human and cosmic life. Moreover, they had no difficulty in admitting the incarnation; indeed it harmonized with their aesthetic conception of the world. It was not so with the Jews. Among them no man could look upon God's face and live. However, the question suddenly arose not merely of looking upon it, but of recognizing it in human features. Worse still, the Jewish conscience was faced with a yet more insuperable obstacle. It had never conceived of a God other than great and powerful; now, as the highest temptation, it was offered a crucified God to worship. God's humiliation, willed by God himself, seemed a sacrilege, a betrayal of the ancient faith in the glory and majesty of God. These beliefs, hard-set and deeply rooted, gave rise to the rejection of Christ.

So throughout Christian history voices were raised

to anathematize the Jews, guilty of having crucified Christ, and to assert that from then onwards they bore a curse, which they brought upon themselves when they allowed the blood of Christ to fall upon themselves and upon their children. Christ was rejected by the Jews because he was not the Messiah who should found the kingdom of Israel, but revealed himself as a new God, suffering and humiliated, preaching a kingdom not of this world. The Jews crucified Christ, Son of God, in whom the whole Christian world believes. Such are the arguments used by the detractors of Israel who overlook the fact that their condemnations betray a serious omission. It is this: if Jews rejected Christ, Jews none-the-less were the first to follow him. Who were the Apostles, forming the first Christian community, if not members of the Jewish race? Why, then, see only the backslidings and ignore the virtues? The Jewish people cried 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' But have not all peoples shown an extraordinary propensity to crucify God's messengers to them, their teachers and their great men? Everywhere prophets have been stoned. The Greeks condemned Socrates, the greatest of their sons, to death by hemlock. Should we on that account curse all their progeny?

Besides, when we go a little further into the question we shall be forced to admit that the Jews have not been the only ones to crucify Christ. In the course of a long history, the Christians, or rather those who have usurped the title, have by their deeds

contributed to this torture. They have done so, among other things, by their anti-semitism, their hatred and their violence, their submission to the powerful of this world, their betrayal of Christ's truth which they have adjusted to their own interests. Well, it is better to renounce Christ openly than to use his name for opportunist motives while building one's own kingdom.

When Jews are cursed and persecuted because they crucified Christ, the principle of generic vengeance is accepted. This principle was inherent in the Jewish people as in all peoples of antiquity. But this sort of vengeance is unalterably opposed to Christianity, for it contradicts the Christian idea of individual dignity and responsibility. Besides, Christian morality permits no vengeance of any sort, neither that aimed at the individual nor that which spreads and becomes transmitted to all the descendants. Vindictiveness is sinful, and it is right to repent of it. Descent, race, reprisals—all these notions are foreign to pure Christianity; they have been brought into it from outside and derive from the paganism of antiquity.

III

The Jewish problem is connected with the historiosophic theme of the Second Coming. Does the kingdom of God belong exclusively to the other world, or may we await it and prepare for its coming here and now? Christ said 'My kingdom is not of

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this world'. From these words it has generally been deducted that efforts aimed at bringing it about were in vain. It was sadly confirmed that our earthly city could not possibly be removed from the power of the prince of this world, although indeed the latter was highly venerated by professed Christians. Upon this notion was constructed the Christian state, in which no evangelical truth was realized. However, Christ's words may have another meaning; they may mean that the kingdom of God does not resemble earthly kingdoms, that its foundations are different, that its justice is diametrically opposed to the law obtaining here below. In this case the Christians would be wrong to submit to the prince of this world, wrong not to labour in promoting the justice of God's kingdom—not to take up the task of transforming this world.

Jacques Maritain,[9] leader of French Thomism and defender of true Christian humanism, has written a remarkable article on Judaism which has been published in a collection of essays called *The Jews*.[10] In it he makes an interesting distinction between the Jewish and Christian vocations. In his view the Christians welcomed the supernatural truth of Christianity in its relation to heaven, while they neglected the realization of justice in social life. The Jews, on the other hand, rejected the supernatural truth of Christianity, while they appointed themselves the messengers of truth on earth, the promoters of justice in collective life. It is a fact that the

idea of social justice was introduced to the human conscience chiefly by Judaism. The ancient Hebrew prophets were the first to demand truth and equity in social relations, the first to espouse the cause of the humble and the oppressed. The Bible gives us an account of a periodic redistribution of wealth, the aim of which was to avoid its being monopolized by one group and thereby to eliminate the radical distinction between rich and poor.[11] The Jews, as we have seen above, took an active part in the world socialist movement, directed against the power of capital. The 'Aryans', for their part, easily came to terms with inequity. Thus, in India, a caste régime, sanctioned by the religious conscience, was set up. In Greece, the greatest philosophers did not reach the level of condemning slavery.

Christians freely proclaim that the kingdom of God cannot be attained without the Cross. In this they are completely right. Everything on our sinful earth must be raised upon the Cross before it can enter the kingdom of God. But they delude themselves when they hold this axiom up against every attempt to clear the way for the achievement of Christ's justice upon this earth. The unfortunate thing is that the Christians, while accepting the Cross, should have neglected to put its message into practice; although the final realization of God's kingdom is impossible in this world and implies its transfiguration, a new heaven and a new earth. Moreover, the representatives of historical Christianity, that is

to say Christianity adapted to the conditions of this world, were not in the least disdainful of the things which are Caesar's. Quite the reverse: they acknowledged them as their own and consecrated them. Now Caesar's kingdom was just as far removed from ordinary human justice as from Christian justice, and neither equity nor humanity was known to it. Such were, in the past, the 'Christian States', the Christian theocracies, as they came into being both East and West.

The current objection expressed by the Jews against Christianity is that the Christian faith cannot be realized, and that those who profess it have proved this only too well. This faith demands a morality so high that its laws are often in conflict with human nature. To support their argument the Jews point to Christian social life, so unlike that advocated by Christ, and confront Christianity with their own faith which can be, and has been, put into practice. Salvador, an eminent French Jewish thinker and scholar of the mid-nineteenth century who wrote one of the first lives of Jesus, developed this theory. Rosenzweig,[12] a notable Jewish religious philosopher who, with Martin Buber,[13] translated the Bible into German, formulated the difference between Judaism and Christianity in a curious way. According to him the Jew is destined by his religion to remain in the Hebrew world of his birth and should confine himself to improving and perfecting his Judaism. He is not required to abdicate his nature. This is the

reason why the Jewish faith can be easily achieved. Now the Christian is by nature pagan; in order to carry out the precepts of his faith he has to withdraw from the world to which he belongs, repeal his nature, and break with his original paganism. This is what makes the Christian faith so difficult to apply in practice. We are reduced to inferring from these assertions that the Jews, in short, are the only ones who are not born pagans. In making this distinction Rosenzweig reaches a conclusion in favour of Judaism. For my part I think his assertions do honour to Christianity. The Divine Revelation is drawn from another world and naturally seems ill-adapted to this world, naturally requires an advance along the line of greatest resistance. Having said this, we must agree that the Christians have done everything to discredit their faith in the eyes of their adversaries. They have terribly abused the argument of its inaccessibility. They have drawn the most harmful deductions from the doctrine concerning human nature, invoking this in order to yield to sin and to contrive a system enabling them to adapt themselves to it. Constantin Leontyev, a very sincere and acute thinker, is in this respect especially instructive. He reduced Christianity to the salvation of the soul in the next world, to what he called 'transcendent egoism' and rejoiced because Christian justice could never be instituted on earth, for this achievement would have been out of harmony with his pagan aesthetic. Borrowing Rosenzweig's terminology, we

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can say that Leontyev[14] remained in his pagan world and only wished to withdraw from it with the help of monastic asceticism in order to save his own soul. We must admit that these errors have done the greatest harm to Christ's cause; but do not let us forget that they must be imputed to Christians and not to Christianity.

IV

Can the Jewish problem be resolved within the bounds of history? That is a tragic question. Whatever the answer may be, the solution does not seem to lie in assimilation, the nineteenth century's hypothesis which did honour to its humanitarian feelings. Today, alas, we are not living in a century of mercy, and the events we are witnessing give us little hope of seeing the problem solved by the fusion of Jews with other peoples. Besides, we must observe that this solution would have meant their disappearance. There is likewise no room for optimism on the ground that this riddle will be answered by the establishment of an autonomous Jewish state, in other words by Zionism. The Jews experience persecution even in the land of their forefathers. In any case this solution does not, in our view, appear to conform with the messianic mission of the Jewish people. Israel is and remains a wandering people. It might be said that its destiny is eschatological and will find no solution till the end of time. This hypothesis is not, however, a reason for Christians

to cast off their human duties to the Jews. In the Apostle Paul we find mysterious words wherein he affirms that all Israel shall be saved. These words are variously interpreted, for some understand by Israel not only the descendants of the Hebrew people, but also Christendom, that is to say, the new Israel. At all events, it is very possible that the Apostle Paul had in mind the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and attached a particular value to this.

If we are witnessing the development of an insane anti-semitism we are also witnessing at the same time an increase in Jewish conversion to Christianity. This manifestation is of no interest to racial anti-semites for whom the material fact of blood overrides the spiritual fact of faith. But so-called religious anti-semites ought to see in this conversion the only possible solution to the problem. For my part I am inclined to think there is indisputable truth in this. At any rate, there should be no possible ambiguity upon this subject. There can be no question of the Christians' demanding that the Jews be converted by holding a knife at their throats and, should they refuse, of regarding the pogrom as a natural sanction; this would be nothing but a monstrous moral aberration utterly unrelated to faith. In that case, why not demand the conversion to Christianity of various 'Aryan' peoples who have remained aloof from it or who maintain a purely external Christianity? Conversion to Christianity is, moreover, an

essentially personal thing, and it is doubtful whether we shall be able to confer upon the whole peoples the title of 'Christian' or 'Anti-Christian' in the future.

In order that Jews may become converted it is of the highest importance that Christians should make a start by getting converted themselves, that is by becoming real believers and not formal ones. Those who hate and crucify have no claim to be called Christians, whatever external forms they may adopt. For it must not be forgotten that professed Christians are the principal obstacle to the conversion of the East, to that of the Chinese and Hindus. The state of the so-called Christian world, with its wars, its national hatreds, its colonial politics, its oppression of the working classes, presents a formidable temptation. Those of the faithful who think they are the most just, orthodox and pious—it is precisely they who are held in the greatest contempt by the lowly. Christians thrust themselves in between Christ and the Jews, concealing the true image of the Saviour from them. It is possible for the Jews to acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah, for this tendency already exists in the heart of Judaism; it is possible for them to declare the historical and religious error which resulted in the rejection of Jesus to be a fatal one. But in so doing they will recognize the crucified Messiah and, through him, the humiliated God.

The forms taken by present-day persecution of the Jews amount, from the Christian point of view, to a

final condemnation of anti-semitism. In this fact must be found the virtue of Nazi racialism. This doctrine has deep roots in Germany, but they do not draw sustenance from Christian soil. To me this is some relief. I consider that anti-semitism based upon orthodoxy, the kind which is widespread for example in Rumania, is infinitely more harmful, for it compromises Christian faith and is not even worth seriously refuting. Anti-semitism is fatally sure to develop into anti-Christianity; it must reveal its anti-Christian nature. That is what we are seeing today. Corresponding to this phenomenon, a process of purification is going on within Christianity itself; Christian truth is freeing itself from the accretions of the centuries. Thanks to these, Christian truth had been adapted to the régimes in power, to everyday social conventions, to a lower level of conscience and culture, and had been made use of for particularly worldly ends. This process of purification, which we owe partly to the fact that Christians are themselves being persecuted, has brought two forms of Christianity into relief: the old, tenacious of the acquired deformities, and the new, trying to get rid of them and to renew its promises of fidelity to Christ and to the evangelical revelation of God's kingdom. At all events, true Christians, free from all formalism, nominalism and conventionalism, will always be a minority.

The concept of the Christian state, which amounted to a serious lie and a depreciation of

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Christianity, will henceforth exist no more. Christians will struggle in the spirit, and, by doing so, will be able to exert an inner influence which they had lost. To this end they will have above all to uphold justice and not power which enables them to prosper. It is they, precisely, who will have to come forward to defend the dignity of man, the value of every single human being, irrespective of his race, his nationality, his class and his position in society. It is Man, the human ideal, freedom of spirit that the world is attacking from every side. The attack is carried out partly through the anti-semitic movement which rejects human dignity and human rights. The Jewish question is a test of the Christian conscience and of its spiritual strength.

There have always been, and there always will be, two races in the world, and the boundary between them is more important than any other; crucifiers and crucified, oppressors and oppressed, persecutors and persecuted. It is superfluous to specify which one Christians should belong to. Of course, in history the rôles can be reversed but that does not alter the truth. Today Christians are being persecuted as in the early centuries. Today Jews are being persecuted as so often before in history. These facts are worth thinking about.

Russian anti-semites, living in a condition of morbid emotion and obsession, allege that the Jews rule Russia and oppress the Christians there. This assertion is deliberately false. It was not the Jews in

particular who were at the head of militant atheism; 'Aryan' Russians also played an active part. I am even inclined to believe that this movement represents a specifically Russian phenomenon. A nobleman, the anarchist Bakunin, was one of its extreme representatives, as was Lenin too. It was precisely on the subject of Russian nihilism and the inner dialectic of its nature, that Dostoievsky made such sensational revelations. It is just as false to maintain that Jews are ruling Russia. Lenin was not a Jew, neither were the principal leaders of the movement, nor the masses of peasants and workers who ensured the triumph of the revolution. Those who were Jews have been shot or imprisoned. Trotsky has become the object of an unanimous hatred. It would be infantile to conceal the facts that the Jews played their part in this social upheaval, that they formed an essential element of the revolutionary intelligentsia, but this behaviour can be explained by their previous position as oppressed people. That the Jews took part in a fight for liberty I think a virtue. That they too resorted to terror and persecution I consider not the outcome of any specific Jewish quality, but of the hideous character of every revolution at a certain phase in its development. In fact, the Jews were by no means Jacobins in the terror, and besides, they form today an impressive percentage of Russian emigrés.

I recall that at the time I was still in Soviet Russia the owner of the house I lived in, who was a Jew,

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used often to say to me: 'You don't have to answer for Lenin being a Russian, while I shall have to answer for Trotsky being a Jew. Isn't that a flagrant injustice?' As things turned out, he had the good fortune to return to Palestine. As for me, I am ready to accept my share of responsibility for Lenin's coming to power. Unfortunately, facts do not exist for those whose thought is determined by resentment and befogged by emotions and crazy obsessions. Only a spiritual cure can open their eyes and give them a glimpse of realities in their true light.

COMMENTARY AND NOTES

For

Cecilie Sarah Spears

1908–1936

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THE PROBLEM of anti-semitism is a perennial one. It has for over two thousand years tested the strength of man in his efforts to wrestle with it and even now, after the slaughter of six million victims and the continued persecution of those who somehow survived the Hitlerian cataclysm, the problem remains a formidable challenge to his conscience and to the Christian world. Let it not be thought that anti-semitism reveals itself only in mass carnage and in the sacrifice of a whole people. It exists in an attitude which expresses itself albeit sometimes innocently in a myriad form of slander, prejudice and intolerance. The difference is not one of kind, but only one of force and emphasis. The former is the more demoniac that assaults the mind, the latter corrodes it slowly, tortuously, but none the less surely. Both can only lead to the spiritual poverty of man and his degradation. Such would be the ultimate effect of a phenomenon that has afflicted Western civilization throughout its whole history, alike in time and in space. Some indications of its enigmatic features can be gathered from the vast literature that has sprung up endeavouring to assign to anti-semitism causes of varying character and order.[15] It is only natural that it should

have attracted historians, sociologists, theologians and psychologists and summoned their wisdom and research to its analysis. Nor can it be said that their labours have been in vain. There has been a great temptation on the part of many to claim for their individual studies a conclusiveness as bewitching as it is unmerited; but it cannot be denied that their work has vastly broadened the general historical background of anti-semitism and laid bare its multifarious ramifications.[16] It is not my purpose here to dilate upon the different definitions and causes of anti-semitism but it is necessary briefly to indicate their main trends.

Of the many theories which have been propounded one maintains that anti-semitism is the universal example of xenophobia, in this case a primitive dislike of the Jews as representing a group which is different, unfamiliar and strange and it is this quality of 'otherness' in the Jew which is the primary cause of hostility towards him.[17] The economic theory has it that the basic cause of anti-semitism must be sought in the role of Jews in the modern world as the alleged forerunners of capitalism and that the peculiar position they occupy in the economic structure of modern society makes them the object of hatred for those who are dissatisfied with that structure.[18] On the other hand, the Marxists, who also adopt an economic interpretation, consider anti-semitism as a weapon of the exploiters to deflect the attentions of the expropriated proletariat away from its real enemy, capitalism. A third theory, somewhat related to the first, asserts that the main cause of the Jewish plight is of a politico-ethnic character, that is to say, that the Jews everywhere persist as an alien minority amid a homogeneous majority and as such must obviously invite the enmity of the nationalist whose aim it is to

attain the uniformity of nationality and culture.[19] Yet another theory employs terms such as race, colour and blood in its view that the Jew is biologically of a different and lower order than the rest of mankind.[20] Accordingly, since it is impossible for the Jew to escape from his fate, anti-semitism was, is and eternally will be. The newest interpretations are contributed by the social psychologists who use terms such as frustration, personal insecurity, rebellion against authority, displaced aggression, and sadistic urge—all and any of which attitudes find concrete expression and outlet in the hatred and persecution of the Jews.[21]

This very fragmentary treatment of the various approaches to anti-semitism serves to point out how numerous and widely differing in results are the attempts to arrive at a single, basic, primary cause. Just as numerous and various are the attempts to find the solution to this age-old problem. In this respect some of the less drastic theories favour more scientific and humanistic education and the furtherance of social relations amongst Jews and non-Jews. Others maintain that the promotion of economic prosperity will minimise the effects of Jewish competition—in other words, only by considerable changes in the social and economic order can anti-semitism be vanquished. More radical propositions are, on the one hand, that the Jews should merge completely, socially and religiously, in the dominant community and, at the other extreme, that the Jews should end once and for all their minority status by becoming a monolithic 'one State, one People' community in Palestine. Psychoanalysis calls for greater scientific controls and techniques in an attempt to find out why certain personalities are more prone to anti-semitism than others. Further, there are the numberless less serious approaches

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advocating the elimination of certain Jewish traits and unconsciously demanding a perfection in the Jew such as obtains in no other being. It is somewhat easier to enumerate the suggested interpretations and solutions of the problem than to assess their individual merits. I shall confine myself to the more important of them and briefly comment on what I consider to be their limitations.

That education, both in the narrow sense of the assimilation of factual data and in the comprehensive sense of the training and development of character, can be of immeasurable importance in individual relationships is beyond doubt. But different considerations arise in a group problem such as is involved in the case of the Jews. What may be of extreme educative value on the level of the individual, may be impotent in the face of tension on the social and international plane. Furthermore, practical experience dictates a certain caution in attributing to education virtues which, in certain instances, it does not possess. The existence of hatred and intolerance among the so-called literate and civilized and the frequent absence of prejudice in the intercourse of the simple and uneducated is a reminder of the difficulties to be encountered in entertaining the solution that more education will necessarily mean less bigotry.

Similarly, those who advocate a re-stratification of the economic order are subject to the same limitations of over-simplification. While there is no doubt that economic changes might eliminate the historically conditioned 'marginal' character of Jews in the economic field (a rôle over which the Jews had no control), such changes would not necessarily lessen the vulnerability of the Jews to attacks which are unrelated in their origin to economic relations. The counsel that Jews should

actively sink their individual differences of social mores and religion into the wider uniformity of the non-Jewish community is based on two hypotheses hardly susceptible of proof: the first, that the non-Jews will willingly accept into their society such assimilated Jews —such evidence as there is shows only too clearly that at least in the past they have not done so—and the second, that such a remedy is one which Jews themselves can be persuaded to adopt. All else apart one cannot discuss a problem *in vacuo* as if personal, spiritual and historical factors did not exist. Furthermore, the so-called solution of assimilation (when applied to an entire people) is, in essence, diametrically opposed to a democratic society. Democracy advocates equal rights for all cultural and ethnic groups and dare not, save at the risk of its own annihilation, seek to impose a dominant way of life and thought on a minority, a minority which has, as it happens, made inestimable contributions historically to the living sources of democracy.

In contradistinction to the idea of uniformity through assimilation, there is that of segregation through the territorial concentration of Jews. Such a solution, insofar as it may be one, is being realized in Israel at this very hour. There can be no doubt that the creation and development of a Jewish community in a normal and completely Jewish atmosphere will cut away at the roots of anti-semitism in at least one corner of the globe. There can likewise be no doubt that this heroic experiment is having, and will have, a profound effect on Jews and non-Jews throughout the world. Men of good will everywhere hope that it will create a new vision of the Jew to replace the distorted image which has so tragically characterized him throughout the ages. But to suppose that anti-semitism will disappear or be con-

siderably lessened with the withdrawal of a fraction of the Jewish people to one soil, betrays a fundamental error in the interpretation of the problem. A nationalist remedy, however perfect in other respects can never be applied to a disease which is, of its nature, an atrophy of the human heart. Here I touch upon the main criticism which is to be levelled against all such remedies as I have briefly mentioned.

I must repeat that the work of those who have undertaken the study of the problem from different sociological angles is of extreme value. They have shed new light on a dark and horrifying tragedy. Each has ventured forth alone in his own particular world to return with tidings which according to his eyes seem good but their virtue is also their imperfection. Their peculiar partiality is their limitation. They have preoccupied themselves with the superficial proximate occasions to the exclusion of the basic causes. In the result we have had recourse to consider the various types of anti-semitism—political, economic, social and psychological, but anti-semitism *per se* as a distinct phenomenon would not, it seems, exist at all. It is true that these various types do exist. Late nineteenth-century Bismarckian Germany was in fact that cradle of modern political anti-semitism which later in this century culminated in the Nazi frenetics of Nüremberg and Auschwitz. Moreover there is ample evidence that anti-semitism expresses itself also in the outbursts of certain economically insecure sections of the community against the Jew whom they imagine to be a partner in a universally prosperous hegemony aiming to dominate and enslave them. Yet again anti-semitism appears in the malicious attacks of the envious and frustrated who attribute to the Jews all the qualities of ambition, energy and creativeness which

they lack—or think they lack. But what we have in all these cases is not anti-semitism traced to its source, but the political, economic and social exploitation of an evil which in its essence is neither exclusively political, economic or socialist in origin. Jean Paul Sartre in his *Portrait of the Anti-Semite* (and this is its chief merit), has valiantly attempted to analyze the tortuous and inconsistent elements of the psychology of the anti-semite and has shown how extremely difficult it is to subject it to a rational critique.[22] This estimate is referable to the different forms of anti-semitism we have been discussing. They are the social rationalizations of a malady which is hidden in the depths of the human soul. Even if we were to accept the validity of these forms it is pertinent to enquire why, if minorities are apt to arouse hostility among majority communities, does the Jewish minority provoke that hostility to a degree and order unknown in the case of any other? Why are criticisms directed against Jews which could not possibly be directed against any other group within the community even assuming that it embodied the same alleged faults and imperfections? Why in the case of the Jews do otherwise responsible people adopt standards of judgment and credulity which dispense with all semblance of logic and reason?[23]

It is in the attempt to answer these questions that we realize the limitation of the rationalistic and liberal approach to anti-semitism. We do not mean rationalism has to be discarded; it has to be transcended. In probing to the deeper roots of anti-semitism amid sub-conscious strata of experience it is necessary to establish an empiricism based on intuitive insights rather than on scientifically demonstrable phenomena. Confronted with the inter-action of the creatureliness of the human being

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and the Divine will of God we come face to face with reality on a level which makes the greatest demands upon our faith, love and charity. In this confrontation the emphasis is not upon the impersonal character of social interpretations, but upon the intensely personal situation of man and man. Seen in this perspective, anti-semitism in essence is not the misdeeds of the uncivilized few, or the mere peripheral by-product of a nation's malevolence or the imperfections of society. Rather does it lay bare the evil inclination of man himself and the degradation of his divine image. Our direct concern here is not society but man, his nature, his evil and his destiny.

It is on this plane, and more particularly from the Christian point of view, that Berdyaev approaches the question of anti-semitism. Proceeding from the proposition that such interpretations of anti-semitism as have been touched upon here do not go deeply enough into the problem, Berdyaev concludes that the hatred of the Jews is an alienation of man which is rooted in his sinfulness. And where you have the fact of human sin there you find also rebellion against the Christian idea and the Christian ideal awaiting its fulfilment in historic terms. Hatred of the Jews is not so much a problem for historians and sociologists as it is a challenge to true Christians, going to the roots of their belief and practice. For Berdyaev, as for many Christians, the Jewish question belongs to the mysteries of human existence, that is to say, it is not a question which cannot at all be solved, but one which is not at its heart amenable to rational and logical analysis, for it cannot even be comprehended without drawing on the inexhaustible sources of the human spirit.

Berdyaev was not an orthodox Christian in the West-

ern sense of the term. Indeed it is extremely difficult to classify him in terms of belonging to 'the Russian Church' or as a proponent of a doctrine or even as an adherent to a particular theology. His subjects are God, Christ and man and in these Berdyaev moves, lives and has his being. The pattern of his thought was not of the logical discursive order of the philosopher but of the visionary's intuitiveness. He is essentially not a philosopher or theologian but a mystic. Knowledge, for Berdyaev, is not a rationally conceived body of philosophical or theological doctrine but a supreme intuitive or creative insight into the meaning of existence. The term 'mystery' for him means a reality which can be penetrated only by an immediate contact with the world of the spirit, a contact which, in effect, transforms the conventional subject-object relationship into one where the knower and the known enter into a union which, though concrete and 'existential' within the subject, is not expressible in terms of rational objectivity.[24] This distinction in Berdyaev between rational and suprarational degrees of knowledge is one of the main characteristics of his approach to the Jewish as indeed to any other question. In this respect he is at one with other Christian thinkers but he is also strikingly dissimilar from them in the sense that he is implacably opposed to what he calls the 'objectivisation' of the human spirit which finds its expression everywhere in this so-called Christian world not least in the Hellenic rationalization of human experience that is found in much of Christian dogma.[25] This opposition is displayed in his attack on certain traditional western forms of Christianity which, he maintains, are to be found at the root of the Jewish problem and the genesis of the centuries-old persecu-

tion. This is the main theme of Berdyaev's thought concerning the relationship of Christianity and the Jews.

The Christian interpretation of the Jewish situation is, generally, dominated by three central notions—'the Chosen people,' 'the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews' and 'the conversion of the Jews.'[26] These three ideas have played a considerable rôle in the persecution of the Jews by Christianity throughout the ages and it is this rôle which Berdyaev condemns boldly and unequivocally and with the prophetic indignation and fearlessness reminiscent of a Péguy or a Léon Bloy. In doing so he does not play the part of a Christian heretic, as many have considered him, but as one who more perhaps than others, sees in true Christianity the key to the understanding of human life and destiny. He revolted instinctively against any attempt to enslave mankind with stultifying rationalizations of high ideals and his revolt is no less fierce when that rationalization is a Church. Freedom from spiritual slavery consists in the progressive unceasing creative effort to escape from a Christianity when it becomes a mere authoritarian ecclesiology.

One of the reasons assigned to the survival of the Jewish people has been their conviction of having been elected by God. To Berdyaev the nature of the Jewish people in thus becoming inextricably bound up with God is at the heart of the Jewish tragedy and the conclusive answer to those who would attempt to classify it in general categories. A people that encountered God at Sinai *as a people* cannot have a history like that of other peoples. 'It has been preserved up to the present through all the stupendous changes and all the misfortunes of the centuries since . . . it enjoys the privilege of having God Himself as its law-giver.'[27] This doctrine of

the chosen people, which, if it confers a privilege at all, is a privilege of responsibility. It implies above all that the Jewish people accepts the call of its election not automatically but only by assuming the 'yoke of the Kingdom of God.' The principle of superiority has absolutely no place in this doctrine. The essence of election is heaven-ward responsibility, not self-glorification. For how otherwise can the fulminations of the Prophets against the abuses of election have any meaning? That the Jews have been chosen by God implies the unique function of Israel to proclaim the importance of Divine justice among the nations: but the Christian interpretation of election has served as a weapon to chastise the Jews. Many Christians contend that the Jews were indeed the elect of God (for what Christian could refute such abundant evidence as the Old Testament affords?) but that they forfeited that status when they rejected Jesus as the Christ. That this was not so was testified pre-eminently by the Apostle Paul himself in his interpretation of the meaning of the elect.[28] But, the words of Paul notwithstanding, historical Christianity has claimed the right to the mantle of the chosen people which the Jews let fall by their rejection of Jesus. Berdyaev, departing radically from conventional Christian thought on this point, speaks of the unwillingness of Christians to acknowledge the Jews as a people with a unique religious destiny. Berdyaev recognizes its dynamism in the religious history of Israel and analyses the historical and spiritual factors in Jewish thought which militated against Israel's acceptance of a God made man. The words of Berdyaev 'awaken memories of the hundreds of years in which stress upon the Jews' rejection of Christ has served to fan the flame of persecution and hatred of the children of Israel.'[29]

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The dual claim of Christians throughout the centuries, that the Jews both rejected and crucified Christ, is one that has wrought untold misery on the Jewish people. It is a claim which is embedded in a host of factors, spiritual, historical and psychological. The part that the Catholic and Protestant churches have played in the persecution of the Jews in this respect is at once considerable and tragic. At the base of many types of anti-semitism which are, on the surface, neither religious nor theological—they may be even agnostic or atheistic—there can be found the seeping and corroding influence of an early religious training which has served to perpetuate the myth that 'the Jews killed Christ.' The crucifixion story as preached and taught by the majority of Christians can have no religious import whatsoever. It can only impress the mind of the young with images which prevent them thereafter from looking upon Jews in a normal light. The harm once inflicted is ineradicable. It becomes a rampart which no lectures, sermons, conferences on brotherhood and inter-faith fellowship can hope to penetrate. Historical veracity on the one hand and the cruelty of the theory of vengeance on the other have no place in the doctrines of Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant. The rejection and crucifixion of Christ by the Jews has become the central pivot of Christian indoctrination regardless of the fact that such teaching disseminates the very seeds of the negation of Christ and the object of his teachings. Berdyaev not only denounces such forms of Christianity but mercilessly advances the 'crucifixion' theory to its logical conclusion. He is not so much concerned with the historical Jesus, but with the Jesus of universal love and grace. Even assuming that the Jews did crucify Jesus, argues Berdyaev, they were also the first to follow him. The

particular historical situation, whatever it may have been, can have no relevance to the central issue which always was and will be this—where there is hatred, persecution, ignorance and prejudice with regard to the Jews, there too is the crucifixion of Christ. Crucifixion, for Berdyaev, is not an historical point in time, it is a passion which is experienced at every moment. It is a source of great sorrow for Berdyaev that, not least among the crucifiers are the Christians who have for centuries accused the Jews of the very crime of which they themselves are the most culpable. It is furthermore a sin for Christians to arrogate to themselves the heavy responsibility of passing judgment on others, for that prerogative belongs to God alone.

The Christian desire to convert the Jews has throughout the Christian world likewise contributed greatly to the momentum of anti-semitism at various epochs. This missionary zeal is fraught with many dangers for both Christians and Jews. When the missionary desires to convert the Jew in the advancement of his own sectarian interests, the Jew will react violently. The spiritual arrogance of those who assert that they alone have the true faith while others are in error cannot but result in the exacerbation of existing antipathies and cause great psychological harm to the Jews. On the other hand, the desire to convert the Jews to Christ without membership of a particular church militates against certain forms of Christianity, not least Roman Catholicism, which cannot desire such conversion without negating the cardinal principles of its own doctrine. This distinction between conversion to Christ and conversion to Christianity is the touch-stone of the many difficulties which attend the efforts of Christian missionaries. Berdyaev believes that conversion to the spirit of Christ in

certain circumstances may be possible but condemns the Christian churches for attempting to convert Jews by 'holding the knife to their throat.' For Berdyaev, conversion to Christ is an intensely personal matter and cannot possibly be considered as a practical solution for a people like the Jewish people. Rather, says Berdyaev, should Christians convert themselves into living Christians and not nominal external Christians who beneath the surface of rite and ceremonial commit acts which constitute a perversion of the spirit and the meaning of Christ. If, indeed, observes Berdyaev, Jews are to be converted it cannot possibly be done by a Christian civilization which is shot through with hatred, national rivalries, wars and oppression, for these are evidence of the absence of Christ in the modern world and the frustration of his designs for the Kingdom of God.

Berdyaev's observations on the Jewish question and its relation with Christianity are to be found in many of his works as well as in the preceding essay. Written in 1940 before the Nazi holocaust had entered its most savage phase, certain parts of it would seem to be outdated.[30] In so far as it alludes to topical events this is indeed so, but for its insight into a problem which remains after the defeat of the erstwhile enemy it is of lasting significance. His message is addressed to Christians and forms an integral part of his message to his generation on all issues which affect Christian life. Berdyaev's thought is an adventure rather than a closed system since he does not claim to proceed along the theoretic lines of academic philosophy.[31] 'I have deliberately over-stepped the limits of philosophical, theological and mystical knowledge so dear to the Western mind as well in Catholic and Protestant circles as in the sphere of academic philosophy.'[32] The true aim of the thinker

according to Berdyaev is first to accept the polarity of life's experience and then to live out the paradox to its ineluctable conclusion. This is perhaps one of the most singular characteristics of Berdyaev. He is more concerned to live out his thought existentially than to present a balanced scheme of thought that pleases the mind but offends the spirit. In this respect he is an existentialist in the line of St. Augustine and Kierkegaard rather than a creator of rational systems in the line of Leibnitz and Hegel. If the relentless struggle for Christ so demands, doctrines hitherto established and accepted must be repudiated and discarded. Berdyaev was indeed a religious revolutionary whose speculation about God was bound up with and inseparable from the destiny of man. The meaning of human existence is to be found in the interdependence of God and man and the interpenetration of the human and divine worlds. There can be no interpretation of man on earth unless it is also a prophetic vision of his greatness in heaven. When that vision is bounded by the restrictions on his own nature to the exclusion of influences higher than himself, then in that moment there is no God and man has died. This biblical relationship between man and God is one that cannot subsist merely in coruscating speculations. It is a challenge by God which can only be met by a response from man and that response must be, for Berdyaev, a creative act rather than a credal or intellectual defence. The divinity of man has ontological foundations in human nature and is not the result merely of an historical event.[33] The drama of love between God and man is one that is enacted in every generation, in every age, at every moment of the Christian life. The modern world gives ample evidence of the twilight of a civilization which has yielded uncom-

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promisingly to a distorted humanism by shutting out God and isolating man. 'The turning point of humanism against man constitutes the very tragedy of modern times. Humanism destroyed itself by its own dialectic... for the putting up of man without God against God leads to man's own negation and destruction.'[34] Modern society and all its concomitant evils stand condemned by Berdyaev as products of a secularized humanism which robs the Christian spirit of its dynamism and produces in its turn a civilization which, for all its pretension, is anti-Christian and inhuman. The only escape for man from his self-willed isolation from the God of the Bible is to restore the original relationship between man and God.[35] The only alternative to a civilization which has throughout the ages crucified Christ is the Christianization of man—not of his Churches, his doctrines or his creeds but of his own personal life. The only answer to the challenge of an evil world is the fulfilment of the Christian ideal. As Berdyaev himself writes in the autobiographical introduction to his *Freedom and the Spirit,* 'all the forces of my spiritual and of my mental and moral consciousness are bent towards the inward understanding of the problems which press so hard upon me. But my object is not so much to give them a systematic answer as to put them forcibly before the Christian conscience.'

It is against this background that Berdyaev's approach to the Jewish problem as outlined in the preceding essay must be considered. Hatred, all hatred, is a sin. Hatred of an entire people is akin to murder. When that people is the Jewish people without which Christ and Christianity are inconceivable, professed Christians enlist in the forces of the anti-Christ. 'Semitism,' writes Berdyaev elsewhere, 'has been grafted on to the Christian spirit and is indispensable to its destiny.'[36] Anti-semitism is a revolt against the will of God that can only be humbled by the confrontation of God by man. In this respect Christian civilization has much to atone for. While preaching brotherhood of man it has indulged in intolerance and persecution on a scale which recalls the primitive darkness of a pagan world. While purporting to promote ideals of peace, harmony and universal unity through Jesus Christ it has readily condemned those whom it considers beyond salvation except through its own faith. In order to safeguard the reality of the historical Jesus it has, through anti-semitism, participated in the denial of that which it seeks to affirm and become an idolator of 'historical sanctities.' In the name of preserving a Church it has tolerated and worked evil in its own midst. The service of Jesus Christ has in this way become a Jesuolatry of the most enslaving kind. By pronouncing judgment on the Jews as a smitten and eternally damned people it has shown an arrogance which has consumed the vitals of its own message. It has—and this is worst of all—relieved the Christian of his personal responsibility in face of the evil of anti-semitism and granted him refuge behind an official barrier of ecclesiasticism. Berdyaev denounces the Christianity of such a civilization in clear and unmistakable accents. His essay, addressed primarily to the Christian world, is not and does not claim to be the final answer to the problem of anti-semitism. It is a methodological error in approaching anti-semitism to believe that its study will produce solutions as if it were a scientific or mathematical problem. In anti-semitism we come face to face with man, his evil, and his potential spiritual greatness in surmounting that evil. Spiritual reform as advocated by Berdyaev is not a solution but a task, not

an end but a beginning. The tenor of his essay reflects Berdyaev's impatience with those who would reject the 'proximate' human solution in favour of the disillusionment of what they imagine to be the final answer to the problem. No interpretations and no solution can be adumbrated without considering the individual responsibility that each Christian bears for the existence of anti-semitism. In many ways Berdyaev's essay is a confession of sin, a sin that can and must be expiated by Christians in the light of their supreme faith in the dignity and worth of the individual as precious in the eyes of God.

The Christian can no longer rest in exclusive doctrines as if they were divine judgments and not, as indeed they are, human conjectures. The true Christian can no longer believe that grace is stored up for the Church whilst for ever denied to those who do not bear allegiance to the Church. The Christian who affirms he has seen and lives in Jesus the Christ must bear the responsibility for his presumptiveness in proclaiming that there can be no peace and no rest for a people that has chosen to follow its own spiritual destiny. If the Church chooses to create a boundary between the saved and the damned by substituting what it conceives to have been an historical moment for the message of Christ, then the true Christian may be duty-bound to leave its confines.[37] This is the gravamen of Berdyaev's thought on the problem of anti-semitism. He confronts his readers with a challenge which demands a personal response, transcending the limitations which ecclesiocracy would seek to impose. Anti-semitism in all its forms must be condemned by the Christian not only in its formal encyclicals, its edicts and its institutions, but in

the personal Christian act and in the flowering of the Christian spirit.

Revelation means, if it means anything at all, that the Christian must struggle not with others but with himself—and in his triumph he will have conquered not the wickedness he sees, or thinks he sees, in others, but the evil which lies buried in his own soul.

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NOTES

1. French Catholic, a novelist, philosopher and Christian thinker (1846-1917), whose vigorous style and prophetic condemnation of contemporary society made him one of the most dominating figures of his time. A study of his life and work has recently appeared: *Léon Bloy—Pilgrim of the Absolute,* edited by Raïssa Maritain with an introduction by Jacques Maritain (London, 1948). Many of Berdyaev's thoughts on the Jews can be traced to Bloy's writings. The quotation here is from his *Le Vieux de la Montagne* which also contains the striking words: 'Anti-semitism . . . is the most horrible slap in the face suffered in the ever continuing Passion of our Lord. It is the most stinging and the most unpardonable because He suffers it on His Mother's Face and at the hands of Christians.'

2. Louis Ferdinand Céline (Destouches) psychopathic French anti-semite. Berdyaev is most certainly referring to his *Bagatelle pour un Massacre* (1938). Céline, after fraternising with the Germans, was after the war exiled to Copenhagen. In a statement issued by him by way of defence to charges of collaboration with the Nazis, Céline wrote: 'The Jews should erect me a statue for the harm I omitted to do them though I could have done.'

3. One of the most remarkable of nineteenth-century Russian religious philosophers. A Platonist, he pleaded for

the effective realization of Christian truth both in the personal and in the social worlds. See Berdyaev's *The Russian Idea* (pp. 214-215) and *Slavery and Freedom* (p. 229). He also concerned himself profoundly with the subject of birth, sex and death and his ideas thereon are formulated in his *The Meaning of Love* (London, 1945).

4. Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882). French diplomat and man of letters who wrote widely on ethnological and philosophical subjects. His *Essai sur L'Inégalité des Races Humaines,* to which Berdyaev here refers, maintained that the nobility of a nation and its capacity to produce creative talent and genius depended upon its Aryan racial content. He was the father of racial anti-semitism and profoundly influenced the English-born Houston Stewart Chamberlain whose *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1899) became the classic of intellectual racial anti-semitism.

5. One of the most notorious forgeries of the century. Originally a satire on Napoleon III written by a French Catholic lawyer (*Dialogue aux Enfers entre Montesquieu et Machiavel*), it was refurbished to appear as the secret plot of the Jews to achieve world domination. The background of this fantastic document and its eventual exposure is contained in an admirable chapter in James Parkes' *An Enemy of the People, Anti-semitism* (London, 1945).

6. It is worthy of note to recall Freud's interpretation of the Jewish question in his *Moses and Monotheism:* 'The hatred for Judaism is at bottom hatred for Christianity and it is not surprising that in the German National Socialist revolution this close connection of the two monotheistic religions finds such clear expression in the hostile treatment of both' (p. 145). Akin to this theory but from a different viewpoint is that of Maurice Samuel in his *The Great Hatred* (London, 1943).

7. Berdyaev is referring to *The Jews and Economic Life* published originally in Leipzig in 1911 by the French Huguenot Werner Sombart which, in the economic field, has been equated with Gobineau's essay in the racial sphere.

See Miriam Beard, op. cit., pp. 363 ff. Sombart's thesis has been much modified by R. H. Tawney in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* and others.

8. This is the view expressed by, among others, A. Fanfani in his *Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism* (London, 1939; p. 7).

9. Maritain wrote a significant essay *Anti-semitism* (London, 1939) which, although written from an orthodox Catholic viewpoint, has many points of contact with Berdyaev in its denunciation of anti-semitism as a spiritual crime and its call to Christians for a new humanism orientated to the message of Christ. Maritain has some very interesting comments on the Jewish question in *Redeeming the Time* (London, 1943; pp. 123-172).

10. Berdyaev refers to the essay 'L'impossible Anti-sémitisme' published in *Les Juifs* (Paris, 1937) and in particular to p. 54. The essay ends significantly with the same quotation from Bloy as appears at the beginning of Berdyaev's.

11. The twenty-fifth chapter of *Leviticus*.

12. Franz Rosenzweig died in 1929 at the early age of forty-three after suffering from paralysis for over eight years. A German Jew, he was one of the most prominent religious thinkers of his age. His output was small in quantity, consisting mainly of *The Star of Redemption* in which the existential divine-human encounter idea is fully developed —and a volume of letters. Writing to his mother on the subject of anti-semitism Rosenzweig remarks: 'The fact of anti-semitism, age-old and ever present, though totally groundless, can only be comprehended by the different functions which God has assigned to the two communities— Israel to represent the eternal Kingdom of God, Christianity to bring itself and the world toward that goal.'

13. Martin Buber was profoundly inspired by Rosenzweig and in his turn has profoundly influenced many Christian thinkers. His classic work *I and Thou* (Edinburgh, 1937) is a poetic expression of the reality of spiritual life where the human 'I' yearns for God—not the objectivised God, to use Berdyaev's phrase—but the profoundly personal immediate

God—the relationship between man and God which is first encountered in the Bible. This theme is further developed in his *Between Man and Man* (London, 1947). The 'divine-human' world of Berdyaev finds more than an echo in Buber's Jewish conception of Israel. 'The unity of nationality and faith which constitutes the uniqueness of Israel is not only our destiny, in the empirical sense of the word; here humanity is touched by the Divine' (*Israel and the World*, New York 1948 p. 169).

14. A sociologist and philosopher of history of the nineteenth century and a Russian precursor of Nietzsche and Spengler. Berdyaev in *The Russian Idea* contrasts him with Solovyev referred to above. Indifferent to the sufferings of humanity and to the dignity and freedom of the individual, Leontyev ended his life in a monastery.

15. Of the numerous studies dealing with the sources of anti-semitism, perhaps the most comprehensive is *Jews in a Gentile World* edited by Isacque Graeber and Stewart Henderson Britt (London, 1942). This is a symposium to which experts in the fields of sociology, history, psychology and philosophy have contributed and demonstrates how complex is the problem of anti-semitism. Particularly readable is James Parkes' *The Jew and his Neighbour: a study of the causes of anti-semitism* (London, 1939).

16. For a broadly based historical introduction see H. Valentin's *Anti-semitism Historically and Critically Examined*. London 1936.

17. This view is taken by Arthur Ruppin, the late Professor of Social Sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, in *Fate and Future of the Jewish People* (London, 1940). See also on this point Louis Golding in *The Jewish Problem* (London, 1938).

18. Miriam Beard in her paper 'Anti-semitism—Product of Economic Myths' in *Jews in a Gentile World* (pp. 362 ff.) deals with economic factors that have been the alleged source of so much anti-semitism.

19. Valentin, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

20. Valentin, op. cit., p. 51.

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21. J. F. Brown: 'The Origin of the Anti-Semitic Attitude' in *Jews in a Gentile World* (pp. 124 ff.): 'The Jew is thus a particularly apt target for displaced aggression for a variety of psychological as well as cultural reasons' (p. 140).

22. Sartre sees anti-semitism in *A Portrait of the Anti-semite* (London, 1948) not as an isolated approach to Jews as such but a way of looking at the world prejudicing one's whole outlook on life. 'Anti-semitism is something adopted of one's own free will and involving the whole of his outlook, a philosophy of life brought to bear not only on Jews but on all men in general, on history and society; it is both an emotional state and a way of looking at the world.' (p. 13.)

23. From the Jewish side, the novelist Sholem Asch remarks passionately: 'Anti-semitism is not a movement. It is a disease. He who is infected with it is unable to have an orientation, a judgment or an opinion which is a result of logical thinking or of actual facts. The anti-semite has no proof, no opinion, no consciousness even, because proof, opinion and consciousness are attained through independent thought. He has no independent thought, he is imprisoned within the magic circle in which his sufferings have immured him.' (*One Destiny*. New York, 1945; pp. 37-38.)

24. Berdyaev develops this point, in particular, in the first chapter of his *Spirit and Reality* (London, 1939).

25. This use of the term 'objectivisation' in Berdyaev denotes briefly the substitution of symbols for the realities they are supposed to represent. Thus, the primal aspect of religion is existential, spiritual and real, but through this process of symbolization man has created forms, doctrines and institutions which tend to become accepted as realities while the true primal reality is lost. Berdyaev sees this tendency at work in certain ecclesiastical conceptions such as the Church which is forever threatening to become divorced from its spiritual sources and thus, from a spiritual point of view, an abstraction. See *Spirit and Reality*, ad loc., particularly pp. 53-55.

26. Students of the relationship between Christianity and

the Jews from the Christian point of view will welcome a recent publication, profusely and learnedly annotated, which will become a valuable source-book on the subject. A. Roy Eckhardt in his *Christianity and the Children of Israel* (London, 1948) examines the approach of the Christian Churches to the Jewish people, and his conclusions, though he travels quite a different road, are in many respects very similar to those of Berdyaev. For both, the assertion of the Catholic and Protestant Churches that they have the true faith, thus equating the Church and Truth, is tantamount to idolatry. Both Churches have in the name of Christ promoted anti-semitism by establishing principles and dogma by rèason of which they are forced 'to discriminate against those who refused to recognise that the Church possesses the Truth' (p. 153).

27. Quoted in Martin Buber's *Israel and the World*, p. 171.

28. See the very important notes to pp. 40-41 of Eckhardt, op. cit., where the author comments on the fact that Paul's account in the eleventh chapter of Romans of the plight of Israel has received scant attention from many writers on the subject. It is to be noted that from the standpoint of neo-Reformation relativism (represented, among others, by Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Emil Brunner and Karl Barth) the refusal to give absolute authority to the Pauline interpretation of the Jewish question in Romans chapters 9-11 and elsewhere, as reflected in the writings of the orthodox Catholics and Protestants, accords with an approach to the Bible not dissimilar from that of Berdyaev.

29. Eckhardt, p. 44.

30. The title-page of the French version entitled *Le Christianisme et l'Antisémitisme* indicates that it is itself a translation from the Russian. I have been informed that the text is based on a lecture given by Berdyaev in Paris in 1938 at one of the public meetings of the *Académie Religieuse et Philosophique Russe* of which he was President. The Russian text was published by the Y.M.C.A. Press in

the review *Put* (The Way) in No. 56 of 1938. The same Russian text seems to have been the basis of a short abridged article by Berdyaev entitled 'The Crime of anti-semitism' published in the American Journal, *The Commonweal* (Volume XXIX, No. 26; April 1939). The translation published here first appeared in England in *Blackfriars* (October, 1948) and later in *The Wind and the Rain* (Volume V, No. 3; Winter 1948-49).

31. The introduction to Berdyaev's *Slavery and Freedom* (London, 1949) gives an instructive autobiographical account of the progress and sources of the author's thought and, in particular, its paradoxical character. Further autobiographical material, perhaps more in relation to Berdyaev's thought than to his *curriculum vitae*, is to be found in two books of Berdyaev published posthumously: *Dream and Reality* (London, 1950) and *The Beginning and the End* (London, 1952). Berdyaev insisted at all times that a man's thought is not to be abstracted from his life. The one is so woven into the other that at least of Berdyaev it can be said that his thought was his life and lived through heroically to the end.

32. Quoted in E. Lampert's *Nicolas Berdyaev and the New Middle Ages* (London, 1946; p. 25): 'I was never a philosopher of the academic type and it has never been my wish that philosophy should be abstract and remote from life' (*Slavery and Freedom*, pp. 7-8).

33. Carl Pfleger's *Wrestlers with Christ*.

34. Berdyaev's *The End of our Time*. See Lampert, op. cit., p. 72.

35. 'The Bible is a book of revelation because there is no objectivisation in it, no alienation of man from himself' (*Slavery and Freedom*, p. 245).

36. Berdyaev's *The Meaning of History* (London, 1936; p. 106). Berdyaev's chapter on the Jews elaborates many of the points touched upon in this essay.

37. See Eckhardt, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

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The End of "**Christianity and Anti-Semitism**".

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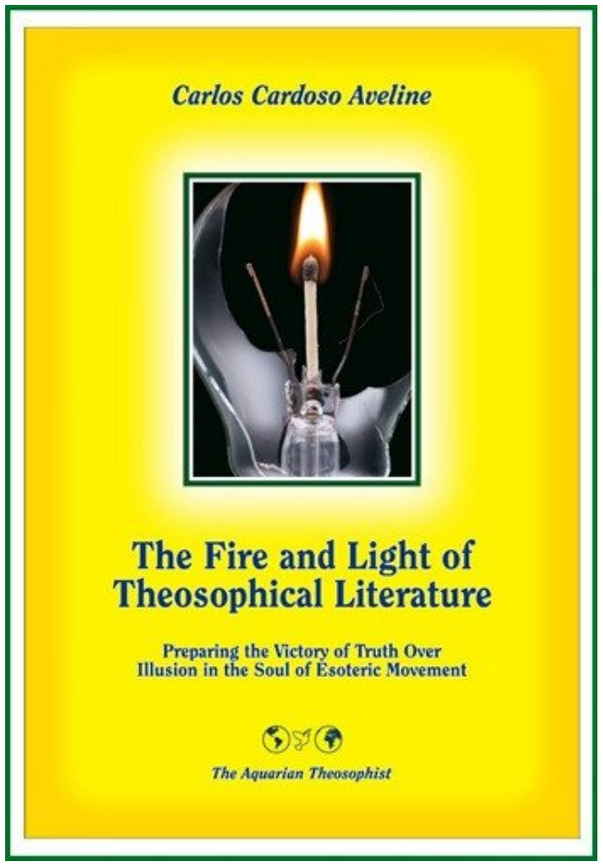
On the role of the esoteric movement in the ethical awakening of mankind during the 21st century, see the book "**The Fire and Light of Theosophical Literature**", by Carlos Cardoso Aveline.



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